



KANSAS

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ADRIAN J. POLANSKY, SECRETARY

August 27, 2004

Secretary Ann Veneman
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
14th Street & Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Sampling and Grading Sprout-Damaged Wheat
for Quality Adjustment in Crop Insurance

Dear Secretary Veneman:

I feel compelled to write you again regarding the ongoing situation with sprout-damaged Kansas wheat and the Risk Management Agency's refusal to consider farmers' claims because elevator operators were unaware that individual samples were required.

I support the sentiments conveyed by Congressman Moran in his August 23 letter to Ross Davidson. Congressman Moran asked that he receive a prompt reply to his letter and, so far, he has not received one.

I think it is important to consider the consequences of the proposed denial of these claims. Based on the best estimates available, the sprout damage may have caused a loss in value exceeding \$15 million in the 2004 Kansas wheat crop. This loss is the latest chapter of hardships borne by Kansas farmers, and it follows on the heels of five years of drought and a damaging late-season frost.

RMA's inflexibility on these claims, as conveyed by Mr. Davidson, reflects an attitude that places a greater premium on the process than on the purpose RMA was created. It is disingenuous to make strict adherence to the letter of the rule a requirement to protect the integrity of the program when many examples of latitude and flexibility have been demonstrated. Similarly, there has been nothing offered that would support that a composite sample does not accurately represent the degree of damage. Mr. Davidson denied them simply because they didn't follow the guidelines to the letter.

The deviation from the sampling protocol, by all appearances, was due to the failure of the information to reach the elevator operators responsible for collecting the samples, as indicated by the immediate change in sample collection once the information was provided.

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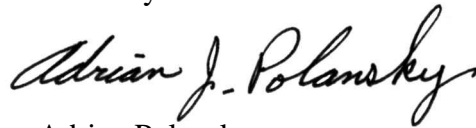
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That illustrates that either RMA failed to make the information known, or that the method they used to disseminate it, failed to convey essential information. In either case, the farmers affected should not be required to pay the price for this lack of communication.

In all my communication with RMA, no one has denied that Kansas farmers harvested sprout-damaged wheat. I think we can agree that these losses are legitimate. However, at a time when USDA is urging greater use of crop insurance, RMA's indifference to the plight of Kansas farmers affected by sprout damage is nothing more than a disincentive to participate in the program.

Please let me know if I can provide more information that will help bring this issue to a fair conclusion.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian J. Polansky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adrian Polansky
Kansas Secretary of Agriculture

cc: Sen. Sam Brownback
Sen. Pat Roberts
Rep. Jerry Moran
Rep Jim Ryun
Rep. Todd Tiahrt
Rep. Dennis Moore
Ross J. Davidson, Administrator, Risk Management Agency
Michael F. Hand, Deputy Administrator,
Regional Compliance Office, Risk Management Agency
Alvin Gilmore, Central Regional Compliance Office, Risk Management Agency
Rebecca Davis, Regional Director, Risk Management Agency